

**NEWSLETTER**

# ANTI-CORRUPTION

**ISSUE #74 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2024 SELDI.NET**



## **WELCOME TO THE ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWSLETTER**

Corruption is a pervasive problem that affects countries, institutions, and individuals across the globe. It undermines trust in government, distorts markets, and hinders economic development. Anti-corruption efforts are crucial for promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. In this newsletter, we will explore the latest developments in the fight against corruption, including legislative and policy updates, investigative reports, and case studies of successful anti-corruption initiatives. We hope to inspire and inform our readers on the importance of anti-corruption measures and the impact they can have on building more equitable and just societies.

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### **KNOWLEDGE AND OUTREACH**

Center for the Study of Democracy | [www.csd.bg](http://www.csd.bg)

# NEWS BY SELDI MEMBERS

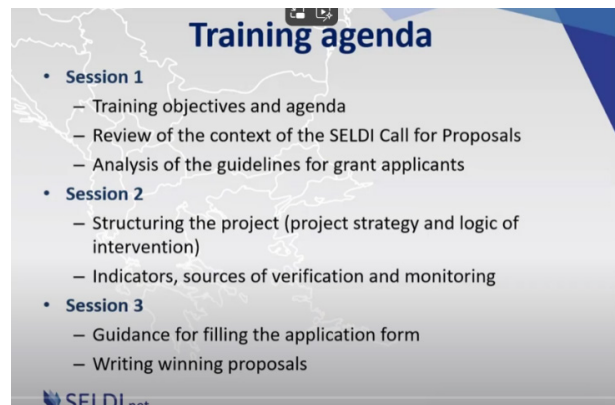
## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE TIRANA POLICY FORUM ON COUNTERING CORRUPTION AND STATE CAPTURE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



On October 3, 2024, the Albanian Center for Economic Research (ACER), in collaboration with the Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) network, organized a forum aimed at fostering cooperation among civil society, the business community, and law enforcement in the Western Balkans, with a focus on the fight against corruption to accelerate the region's EU integration. Despite a slight increase in public confidence in the rule of law, corruption remains deeply entrenched in the region, was the main conclusion of the partner's discussion. Governments continue to struggle with strengthening their anti-corruption bodies, while regional instability and geopolitical factors exacerbate the challenge.

**MCIC & Voice of America, 3 October 2024**

## SELDI SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME TRAINED GRASSROOT AND YOUTH CSOS IN ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVES DEVELOPMENT



The MCIC team recently organized a series of training sessions for pre-selected organizations invited to submit full applications in response to the regional Call for Proposals for the SELDI Small Grants Programme, "Financial Support for Grassroots and Youth CSOs with Outreach to Citizens". Held on October 24 and 29, 2024, the sessions focused on key project cycle phases, including project ideas development, defining intervention logic and indicators, and crafting quality project proposals. Furthermore, on October 31, Jasmina Ristovska, Coordinator of the Regional Anticorruption Network, led a specialized training on budget proposal preparation.

**SELDI, 31 October 2024**

## 'TRAMPLE ON CORRUPTION' – A STRONG MESSAGE SENT AT THE SKOPJE MARATHON 2024



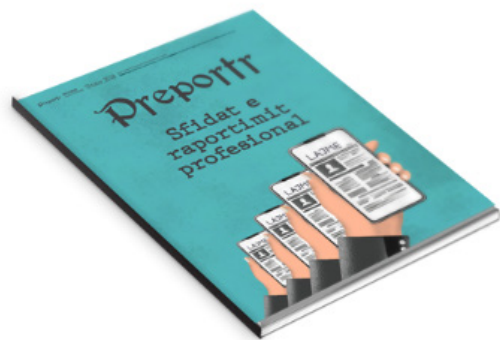
This year, the Skopje Marathon was not only a sporting event but also a platform for involving citizens in the fight against corruption. As part of the marathon's 20th-anniversary edition, the "Citizens Against Corruption" program saw nearly 13,400 runners symbolically "trample on corruption" through interactive activities and educational materials, thousands of citizens were motivated to participate in anti-corruption initiatives. **MCIC, 8 October 2024**

## TWELVE CSOS AWARDED GRANTS TO INCREASE CIVIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN NORTH MACEDONIA



Twelve civil society organizations and their partners are grant recipients through the Citizens Against Corruption program under which they will implement projects aimed at increasing transparency, accountability and integrity culture, with a special focus on involving citizens in the fight against corruption. Over the next two years, these organizations will work on projects covering various topics, including promoting accountability in higher education, transparency and monitoring of courts, fighting corruption at the local level, strengthening the private sector, as well as improving ethical standards in the health sector. **MCIC, 31 October 2024**

## COHU'S RESEARCH REVEALS MAJOR ETHICAL BREACHES IN KOSOVO'S MEDIA REPORTING



On October 4, COHU through its investigative media wing, Preportr, held a round table to unveil a research report on the state of ethical reporting in Kosovo's written media. The research reveals significant breaches in ethical standards, highlighting key areas where media outlets often misrepresent or under-represent certain groups. A special data collection suggests that women and children are the most misrepresented in terms of ethical reporting. Notably, these findings drew media attention, with Voice of America dedicating a special story to the research. **Reportr, 4 October 2024**

## CSD: EU IN SERBIA TARGETED BY DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS



[Europeanwesternbalkans.com](https://europeanwesternbalkans.com) 12 September 2024

The Sofia-based Center for Study of Democracy (CSD) organized a public discussion aimed at strengthening European integration and enhancing democratic resilience in the Balkans, with a focus on civil security and the rule of law. During the discussion titled "Democratic Resilience, Rule of Law and Economic Security: Charting Policy Options for the Western Balkans" and held at Europe House in Belgrade, CSD presented its analysis on how economic dependencies and media control are used to undermine democratic reforms in the region.

## EMPOWERING CITIZENS: CEMI WITH A THIRD WORKSHOP ON OVERCOMING PRACTICAL CHALLENGES IN EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION



On 23 September, as part of the PROSPECTA project which promotes openness and transparency in administration with the support of the Ministry of Public Administration, CeMI hosted a workshop titled “Submitting Requests for Free Access to Information”, at the Assembly Hall of the Municipality of Bijelo Polje. The first part of the workshop familiarized the participants with key concepts related to the right to access information. In the second part of the session, they applied the acquired knowledge, learning how to draft and submit requests for information in practice. **CEMI, 23 September 2024**

# ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWS FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS

## INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS JOIN FORCES WITH ALBANIA'S ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION



Albania has launched a major initiative to advance reforms in governance, the rule of law, and anti-corruption through the creation of the Special Parliamentary Commission on Advancing Reforms. Operating from May 2024 to March 2025, the commission is a key part of Albania's strategy to meet EU membership requirements by 2030. Led by Socialist MP Fatmir Xhafaj, it also involves civil society representatives such as Zef Preçi, Executive Director of the Albanian Center for Economic Research, ensuring informed and inclusive decision-making. The initiative has gained support from the US Embassy and the EU Ambassador Silvio Gonzato who sees it as a critical step in Albania's EU integration. **Reporter.al 6 September 2024**

## EU-ALBANIA NEGOTIATIONS: ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS STILL INSUFFICIENT



On 15 October, Albania held its second Intergovernmental Conference in Luxembourg, opening its first chapter of accession talks with the European Union. Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade emphasized the need to accelerate the enlargement process, calling 15 years of waiting "unreasonable." European Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi also stressed the importance of this step for both Albania and the EU's future enlargement while Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama reaffirmed Albania's commitment to EU integration and

set a goal to complete the process by 2030. According to the EU's official position, Albania still has work to do in the fight against corruption, media freedom and transparency in order to achieve that goal. **Reporter.al 15 October 2024**

## FORMER PRESIDENT OF ALBANIA ILIR META ARRESTED ON CORRUPTION CHARGES



In Tirana, former Albanian President and Freedom Party leader Ilir Meta was arrested on 21 October by Albania's Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) on charges of corruption, money laundering, and asset concealment. While the charges are not officially disclosed, investigations suggest multiple instances of passive corruption, crime proceeds laundering, and concealment of assets, allegedly in collaboration with others, including his wife, Monika Kryemadhi. Meta and Kryemadhi are accused of receiving a luxury villa from a businessman in exchange for using their political influence to secure favorable legislation. Both deny the charges, calling it a politically motivated attack by Prime Minister Edi Rama. Political analysts view the arrest as a sign of Albania's judiciary taking stronger action against high-level corruption. **Voice of America, 21 October 2024**

## ENLARGEMENT WITHOUT STATE CAPTURE: A CALL FOR ACTION FOR THE NEXT EUROPEAN COMMISSION



An article by the Center for Study of Democracy (CSD) calls on the European Union (EU) to address state capture and systemic corruption in the Western Balkans to ensure successful enlargement. Despite significant investments, such as the €690 million under IPA II (2014-2020) for rule of law reforms, tangible progress has been limited. The authors advocate for a shift from merely adopting legislation to ensuring its effective enforcement, highlighting the importance of measurable outcomes in anti-corruption efforts. They urge the EU to adopt a more impact-oriented approach that focuses on the implementation of reforms and the dismantling of entrenched oligarchic networks, in order to ensure both the EU's influence and the region's integration. **Europeanwesternbalkans.com, 2 October 2024**

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION CONDEMNS PROPOSED LAW ON FOREIGN AGENTS IN MONTENEGRO



The Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) has strongly criticized the draft law on foreign agents proposed by the Coalition for the Future of Montenegro, calling it a deliberate attempt to weaken the non-governmental sector. CeMI argues that the bill is part of a broader strategy aimed at weakening civil society, which plays a crucial role in combating corruption and holding the government accountable. Vladimir Simonović, Head of CeMI's Legal Department, emphasized that the proposed law closely mirrors controversial foreign agent laws seen in countries under autocratic regimes such as Russia and Belarus. **CeMI, 9 October 2024**

## UPDATE ON FBIH LAW ON PUBLIC ENTERPRISES AMENDMENTS



The Assistant Minister and Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Energy, Mining and Industry met with CCI representatives in late September to discuss ongoing legislative developments. During the meeting, they confirmed that work is currently underway on drafting amendments to the Law on Public Enterprises of the Federation of BiH, with the first draft expected to be completed by the end of December 2024. The Ministry officials reaffirmed their commitment to incorporating previously agreed CCI initiatives into the Law. They also assured that before submitting the draft to the FBIH Government for review, it would be shared with CCI for their comments and feedback. **September 2024**

## CEMI: LACK OF FREE ACCESS TO INFORMATION POSES A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR MONTENEGRO'S INSTITUTIONS



Increasingly frequent abuses of the right to free access to information are straining Montenegro's state institutions and reducing the possibility of efficient processing of legitimate requests. The need for digitization of archives to improve efficiency was highlighted at the roundtable "Openness of Public Administration, Space for Improvement", organized by CeMI. CeMI Program Director Teodora Gilic emphasized that in an era where information is a critical resource, ensuring access to information is vital for ensuring transparency, accountability, and participatory democracy. **CeMI, 30 September 2024**

## COMMITTEE APPROVES ANNUAL REPORTING INITIATIVE FOR PUBLIC COMPANIES IN FBIH

On October 31, 2024, the Committee for Economic and Development Policy, Finance and Budget of the House of Peoples of the Federation of BiH Parliament unanimously approved a CCI initiative to mandate an annual review of operational reports from public companies under FBIH jurisdiction. The initiative tasks the House of Peoples leadership and the FBIH Government with ensuring these reviews include financial statements, auditor reports, and the Government's position, with reports due within 90 days. Previously adopted by the House of Representatives in May, this initiative will next be presented for adoption at the House of Peoples session. **31 October 2024**

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSED KEY FINDINGS ON THE STATE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND CORRUPTION DRIVERS IN NORTH MACEDONIA



On 10 October, the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, along with the IPA EU Project “Support to the Rule of Law”, organized a roundtable to discuss findings from the Report on Mapping the Status of Public Procurement and the Key Generators of Corruption, presented by expert Ms. Sabina Fakić. SCSC President Tatjana Dimitrovska highlighted the Commission’s active role in preventing corruption in public procurement and strengthening institutional integrity. She also stressed that public procurement, identified as a high-risk area for corruption, will be a central focus in the upcoming National Strategy for 2026-2030. **DKSK, 14 October 2024**

## SPECIAL REPORTS ON 2024 CAMPAIGN FINANCING HIGHLIGHT NEED FOR LEGAL REFORMS IN NORTH MACEDONIA



On October 16 the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, supported by the National Democratic Institute, presented special reports on the established state of financing of the 2024 presidential and parliamentary election campaigns in North Macedonia. The reports were produced with support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) from the United States. During the presentation, the main emphasis was placed on the identified systemic weaknesses in the Electoral Code, the need to amend the legal framework, and other issues related to the conduct and monitoring of the electoral process. **DKSK, 18 October 2024**

## CRIMINAL CHARGES FILED AGAINST FORMER MINISTER OF CULTURE IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Criminal charges have been filed against the former elected minister of the Ministry of Culture Kostadinovska Stojčevska for “abuse of official position and authority”, in particular in her capacity as an official. On 19 February 2024, she allegedly abused her official position and authority by bypassing legal procedures in the reconstruction of the Universal Hall in Skopje. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has identified potential irregularities, revealing that after the City of Skopje transferred the project to the Ministry of Culture, the required public procurement process was not conducted. Instead, the Ministry entered into a questionable agreement with a Skopje-based contractor despite the original project being declared completed in September 2023. Consequently, the Ministry paid the contractor 27,197,845 denars allegedly enabling unlawful financial benefits. **Civil.mk, 31 October 2024**



## NORTH MACEDONIA'S ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION: 'WE'RE NOT AN OBSTACLE TO PROSECUTING NSA DIRECTOR



The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption's investigation into the appointment of the National Security Agency (NSA) Director does not replace or delay the duties of other competent authorities, the Commission has said. On the contrary, it, "encourages all competent institutions to perform their duties in accordance to their legal competencies". This comes after the commission opened a case for the appointment of the NSA director after receiving a complaint regarding his noncompliance with the conditions to hold such a position. In the same statement, the Commission added that trust in institutional integrity and accountability are strengthened by each body consistently exercising its powers. [Slobodenpecat.mk](https://slobodenpecat.mk), 30 October 2024

## EC REPORTS ON WESTERN BALKANS: FIGHTING CORRUPTION REMAINS A MAJOR ISSUE



The European Commission's latest reports on the Western Balkans highlight corruption as one of the biggest obstacles to the region's EU accession to. During the reporting period, Montenegro made progress in the fight against corruption, while North Macedonia showed none. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia made some advances while Kosovo showed limited progress. Despite adequate legal and strategic frameworks in some countries, all need to improve track records on the investigation, prosecution and indictment in high-level corruption cases. The reports note another common issue: a shortage of human resources and low asset confiscation rates in corruption cases. [European-westernbalkans.com](https://european-westernbalkans.com), 31 October 2024

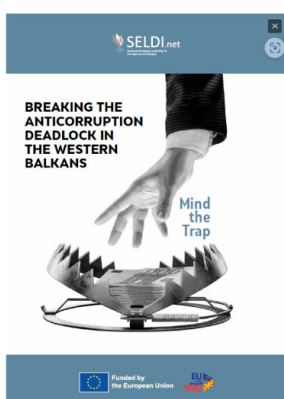
## THE RULE OF LAW MUST REMAIN AT THE CORE OF THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS



The rule of law must remain a central part of the accession negotiations for candidate countries seeking EU membership and an integral part of the Berlin Process, was the main takeaway of the panel discussion on "Rule of Law and Fighting Corruption." Held during the Civil Society Forum in Berlin, the panel concluded that the economic benefits countries gain from regional cooperation cannot be fully realized without an effective fight against corruption and a strong rule of law. [Europeanwesternbalkans.com](https://europeanwesternbalkans.com), 11 October 2024



# PUBLICATIONS



## FROM SOFT POLITICS TO STRONG ACTION: HOW - AND WHY - TO RECALIBRATE EU ANTI-CORRUPTION ASSISTANCE

In its Regional Anti-Corruption Report, SELDI highlights how Russia's invasion of Ukraine has disrupted the Western Balkans' anti-corruption agenda. According to the report, domestic kleptocratic elites aligned with Beijing and Moscow are stalling EU-mandated reforms, and public corruption remains pervasive, with bribery rates ranging from 10% in Montenegro to 40% in Albania. Political corruption sustains networks of state capture, and despite ongoing regulatory efforts, flawed legislation and weak strategies undermine progress. The EU's technical support has had limited impact, and without stronger anti-state capture safeguards, further assistance risks becoming counterproductive. **SELDI, 1 October 2024**



## SPECIAL REPORT ON THE FINANCING CONDITIONS OF NORTH MACEDONIA'S 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Conducted by DKSK, the special report provides an in-depth, objective analysis of the 2024 Presidential electoral process in North Macedonia. Based on thorough research and monitoring, it identifies challenges and weaknesses that could undermine the elections' legitimacy and offers concrete measures and recommendations for overcoming them. **DKSK, 16 October 2024**



## SPECIAL REPORT ON THE FINANCING CONDITIONS OF NORTH MACEDONIA'S 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Another report by DKSK provides a comprehensive analysis of the 2024 Parliamentary elections, with focus on potential cases of corruption, conflicts of interest and other irregularities. Next to identifying challenges that could undermine the elections' legitimacy, the report also proposes concrete measures and recommendations to overcome them. **DKSK, 16 October 2024**



## ANTICORRUPTION 2030: WHAT SHOULD BE IN THE FOCUS OF THE PARLIAMENT?

The Institute for Democracy, based in Skopje, has published a foresight analysis of evolving corruption challenges in North Macedonia, projecting trends until 2030. The analysis aims to instigate a debate about the challenges that institutions will face in the near future, underlining the importance of early familiarization with the risks and the need for strategic planning to tackle corruption. **IDSCS, 3 September 2024**

